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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Statement by the Chair

1. **The Chair** said that the seventy-first session was beginning at a time that was one of the most challenging in recent history. The urgent nature of many of the issues to be addressed by the Committee had become apparent at the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, held in September 2016, at which leaders had recognized the pressing need for policies and programmes to address those issues and to protect and support the persons affected.

2. It was clear that the Sustainable Development Goals, together with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; and the Paris Agreement, would guide the Committee's work in the decades ahead. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would require coherent and coordinated support from the United Nations system, and it was essential to strengthen coordination of the efforts of the Main Committees, in particular those of the Second and Third Committees.

3. The resolutions adopted by the Third Committee should reflect Member States' commitment to the realization of all human rights, including the right to development, and should strengthen the progress made in the protection of civil and political rights and the gradual realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The commitment to leave no one behind implied working for all rights for all persons, without discrimination. She would work towards greater cooperation with the bodies and mechanisms of the human rights system, in particular the Human Rights Council, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the human rights treaty bodies.

4. She also hoped to advance the Committee's work in the areas of criminal justice and crime prevention, while addressing efforts to combat corruption, the world drugs problem and trafficking in persons. The appointment of a trafficking survivor, Ms. Nadia Murad Basse Taha, as Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, reflected the importance of hearing the voices of the victims and working together with civil society organizations.

5. She considered her election as Chair to be recognition of the progress that Colombia had made in supporting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Her responsibility was of special significance at a time when Colombians were experiencing as never before the exhilaration and challenges of negotiating a peace agreement in the context of an armed conflict that dated back more than 50 years. Peace had been elusive for her country, but Colombians would not lose the momentum or progress achieved over the past six years. The path of peace would always bear fruit.

Organization of work (A/71/250; A/C.3/71/1, A/C.3/71/L.1/Rev.1 and A/C.3/71/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1)

6. **The Chair** said that the letter from the President of the General Assembly concerning the agenda items allocated to the Third Committee was contained in document A/C.3/71/1. The list of documents issued under each agenda item was contained in document A/C.3/70/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1. She drew attention to the guidelines concerning the conduct of the Committee's work set out in the report of the General Committee (A/71/250).

7. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) read out a list of the special procedure mandate-holders and other experts scheduled to make presentations to the Committee at its current session.

8. **The Chair** said she took it that, following past practice, the Committee wished to extend invitations to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, the Chairs of treaty bodies or working groups and others to submit their reports to and interact with the Committee.

9. *It was so decided.*

10. **The Chair** said she took it that the Committee wished to approve the organization of work as contained in documents A/C.3/71/L.1/Rev.1 and A/C.3/71/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1, subject to amendment.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that the agenda of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly had failed to provide for an oral presentation by a representative of the commission of inquiry on human rights in Eritrea, as required by paragraph 11 of Human Rights Council resolution 29/18, adopted on 2 July

2015. As plans had apparently already been made for the members of the Commission to travel to New York, it was imperative that the agenda should be amended to correct that omission.

13. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), recalling that the commission of inquiry had been established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 26/24 of 14 July 2014, said that its mandate had been extended by an additional year by virtue of resolution 29/18 of 2 July 2015. The Human Rights Council had not, however, extended that mandate beyond 1 July 2016 and the Commission was therefore deemed to be defunct. It would be for the Committee to decide whether a representative of a commission no longer in existence could be called upon to appear before it and whether the reporting requirement of Council resolution 29/18 would still be valid after the non-renewal of the relevant mandate. The Commission had been composed of three members: the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea and two members appointed by the Council. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur had been extended, and her name appeared on the list that he had just read out to the Committee.

14. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that his delegation concurred with the explanation provided by the Secretariat. As the mandate of the commission of inquiry had not been extended by Human Rights Council resolution 32/24 of 15 July 2016, there was no rationale for the presentation of an oral report. The Council had also decided in July 2016 that a report would be submitted to the Committee by the Special Rapporteur. The recent decisions of the Council superseded any previous decisions of that body. Although, as in previous years, Eritrea opposed country-specific mandates, his delegation would interact with the Special Rapporteur in the context of the Committee.

15. **Mr. Moussa** (Djibouti) said that he had taken note of the Secretariat's remarks but did not share its views. Human Rights Council resolution 29/18, which had effectively been adopted by consensus, contained an explicit request for the presentation of an update to the General Assembly on the situation of human rights in Eritrea. His delegation could not fathom how the Secretariat could fail to comply with the terms of a resolution that had been adopted by consensus. He urged the Secretariat to do all in its power to rectify that omission and include the item on the agenda.

16. **The Chair** proposed that the Committee should authorize her to seek legal counsel from the Office of Legal Affairs on the issue raised by the delegation of Djibouti.

17. *It was so decided.*

18. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) sought clarification from the Chair as to how the question to be referred to the Office of Legal Affairs would be framed and suggested that the Committee should discuss the matter.

Agenda item 26: Social development (A/71/188)

(a) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/71/61-E/2016/7 and A/71/214)

(b) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas (A/71/177)

19. **Mr. Wu** Hongbo (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Committee was working on key issues relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and would therefore consider the broad spectrum of social progress and the follow-up and review of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. Through its work, the Committee would provide critical guidance for social justice and effective social policies in support of rights for all. Transformative leadership and national ownership of the 2030 Agenda would be required to achieve the Goals, which must be implemented in their entirety. Institutions must be strengthened and made more transparent and inclusive. Policy coherence and integration were also essential. Global engagement and partnership should be raised to new heights.

20. Significant progress had been achieved in human well-being in the previous two decades, with more than 1 billion people escaping extreme poverty and significant reductions in hunger and malnutrition, as well as in child and maternal mortality. Improvements had been noted in school enrolment, the provision of essential health services and in gender equality and women's empowerment. Those gains were, however, uneven and fragile with extreme poverty remaining

stubbornly high in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and increased inequalities and unemployment in developed countries. Help was needed to reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Women and children, along with persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples, suffered disproportionately.

21. The exclusion, inequality, conflict and unsustainability characteristic of past patterns of production and consumption must be replaced by a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable course of human development. A United Nations system-wide action plan designed to achieve the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had been finalized in October 2015 and would help to reduce the vulnerability of those peoples. The year 2016 also marked the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Third Committee would have the opportunity to lead the way in showcasing how social, economic and infrastructural policies could ensure that no one was left behind. Strong economies or attempts to correct market and institutional failures or protect poor households temporarily were not enough. The Third Committee, together with the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and advisory bodies, in particular the Commission for Social Development and Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues could play a leading role in ensuring a people-centred approach.

22. **Ms. Bas** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) introduced three reports of the Secretary-General and one note by the Secretariat under agenda item 26(a). Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the realization of internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities (A/71/214), she said that the positive progress achieved had been recognized, but it had been concluded that further efforts were needed to ensure that the Agenda took disability issues into account at the implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation phases.

23. The note by the Secretariat on the World Social Situation 2016 (A/71/188) provided an overview of the *Report on the World Social Situation 2016*. The Report examined patterns of social exclusion, paying close attention to the links among exclusion, poverty and employment.

24. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes (A/71/61-E/2016/7) contained a review of recent policy initiatives taken by Member States. Attention was drawn to the need to change cultural and social norms that perpetuated family violence.

25. **Mr. Hapavuluri** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) introduced the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) entitled "Literacy for life: shaping future agendas and education for democracy" (A/71/177). The report outlined various coordinating and catalysing actions along five strategic axes carried out by UNESCO in the area of literacy promotion since the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

26. **Ms. Vangansuren** (Mongolia) asked whether the representative of UNESCO could elaborate further on the activities and future plans of the Global Alliance for Literacy.

27. **Mr. Hapavuluri** (UNESCO) said that when the literacy decade (2003-2012) had ended, there had been deliberations on how to address the fact that 750 million people worldwide were not able to read or write, and 250 million children were leaving school without attaining an appropriate level of literacy. The Global Alliance for Literacy had been created in response to the need for new initiatives with the cooperation of all stakeholders, as literacy was the foundation for sustainable development. States were encouraged to strengthen institutions so that everyone could attain functional literacy skills. Information and communications technology, such as online courses and applications, had untapped potential, and the Alliance would try to stimulate that hidden potential with an intersectoral approach. Literacy was connected to health, agriculture and other sustainable development domains, and if a common sense of purpose and direction were present, tangible progress could be made by the year 2030.

28. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria) said that Algeria had been devoting particular attention to social development programmes for poverty alleviation, housing, literacy and health care. The social housing programme had been under way for several years in

Algiers, which had become the first African capital free of slums, and had been expanded to other cities. Algeria had an unemployment rate of less than 10 per cent, and action had been taken to support other vulnerable groups and provide them with basic amenities and education through policies that were in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. Anti-poverty summits had been taking place since 1970, but poverty had in fact continued to grow. The international community had been too focused on slogans as opposed to action. The concern was that many States that had not yet attained the Millennium Development Goals did not possess the necessary financial or technical resources to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. Although much had been said about inclusiveness, integration, education, strengthening institutions, gender equality and fighting poverty, little had been said about how to achieve those goals.

30. **Ms. Bas** (Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development) said that a focus on economic issues was not enough; work in the economic and social domains had to be coordinated. The Second and Third Committees should perhaps work together on such issues. The Commission for Social Development, which had convened its most recent session in February 2016, should be the primary platform for discussion of how to implement change. Although financial constraints had an impact, it was possible to use the resources that organizations already had at their disposal. For example, constructing new buildings that were accessible to persons with disabilities would help children with disabilities at no extra cost. That was merely one example, but similar solutions to other problems could be found through concerted efforts.

31. **Mr. Plasai** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that 2016 was an important year for social development, following the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In addition, at the 2016 session of the Commission on Social Development, Member States had supported the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and had reinvigorated their commitments to progress on eradicating poverty and promoting full employment and social integration, in order to leave no one behind.

32. Poverty eradication and social exclusion remained challenges in many parts of the world, and growing inequalities and decent-work deficits had a negative impact on families, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities. National Governments should therefore strengthen their efforts to promote and protect the needs of the most vulnerable in society. There was also concern regarding uneven progress in fulfilling all the interrelated commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development as well as concern regarding the persistent global crises of food insecurity, youth unemployment, climate change, global health threats, violent extremism, terrorism, humanitarian crises and corruption. While each country faced its own specific challenges, the challenges faced by African States, least developed States, small island developing States and States in conflict situations needed special attention.

33. Member States must fulfil their obligations under international law to remove obstacles to the full realization of the rights of peoples to self-determination, in particular those living under colonial and foreign occupation and other forms of alien domination. At the same time, international cooperation was crucial to achieving internationally agreed development goals and promoting the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. There was a need for a stronger, more coherent and more integrated development approach, and it was imperative that the developed States fulfil their commitments regarding internationally agreed official development assistance.

34. The observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 had provided an opportunity to strengthen national family-centred policies and programmes. The implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was key to finding better responses to the new realities of ageing populations. Regional developments to strengthen cooperation and legal frameworks for the promotion, protection and full enjoyment of the human rights and well-being of older persons included the ASEAN Plus Three Statement on Active Ageing, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the

Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons.

35. **Ms. Yparraguirre** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that 2015 had been a landmark year, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community. The next phase of that establishment would be guided by the ASEAN Vision 2025 and by a new 10-year blueprint for the political-security, economic and sociocultural community pillars. There was a firm commitment to ensuring that the Community was inclusive, sustainable, resilient and dynamic and that its peoples would enjoy a higher quality of life, equal opportunities and a sustainable environment, as well as an enhanced capacity to adapt and respond to threats, innovate and contribute proactively to the global community.

36. At the ninth ASEAN ministerial meeting on social welfare and development on 29 September 2016, which had focused on children, persons with disabilities and older persons, the new ASEAN Framework on Social Welfare and Development 2016-2020 had been adopted. ASEAN had also continued to implement the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, whose aim was to achieve sustainable and equitable growth by, for example, expanding social insurance to the informal sector and strengthening social assistance programmes for vulnerable groups.

37. In November 2015, ASEAN had adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Ageing and had organized a number of events aimed at sharing policy advice on ways to enhance institutional capacity to care for older persons. With regard to persons with disabilities, several programmes had been developed as a result of conferences and workshops organized over the previous 12 months.

38. ASEAN had continued to engage with civil society partners on social development. The fifth ASEAN Social Work Consortium Conference in August 2016 had looked at training needs for social workers in the region. ASEAN had also held a dialogue with NGOs during the tenth ASEAN GO-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development.

39. In October 2015, ASEAN had adopted the Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication 2016-2020. The plan had identified a number of priority areas, including rural economic growth and the development of infrastructure and human resources in rural and peri-urban areas. Through the framework action plan, ASEAN was able to help the poor and other vulnerable groups participate fully in socioeconomic opportunities and gain access to social protection.

40. ASEAN would celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2017. Over the course of the previous five decades, it had been proactive in its efforts to include the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of its societies. ASEAN remained committed to achieving an inclusive and harmonious community that promoted the well-being and livelihoods of all ASEAN peoples.

41. **Mr. Martins** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the many challenges to social development across the globe served as a warning that the world must protect its collective interests if it was to succeed in ending poverty and in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

42. African States had continued to register acceptable rates of economic growth and improvements in the social and economic development. However, the region still had the lowest social development indicators, one of the highest levels of income inequality, and disparities in the attainment of many of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The African Union had adopted Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and several policy frameworks and action plans designed to address inequality.

43. Youth development and empowerment were central to Africa's development agenda. In order to capitalize on the demographic dividend offered by the bulge in the region's youth population, the African Union had made investment in youth one of its core priorities in order to build resilience and address the root causes of challenges such as inequality, forced migration and violent extremism.

44. Despite the efforts of member States to implement the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities 1999-2009, only a small proportion of persons with

disabilities in Africa had access to care, rehabilitation and education. Disability still represented a threat to survival in Africa and a strong social protection system was essential. As equal access to employment, education, health care, housing and public infrastructure was the key to economic empowerment, the African Group called on Member States and the international community to work together on disability and do more to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

45. The African Union had adopted the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing, which required all its member States to develop policies on ageing and guided national policymaking. The African Group would remain actively engaged in all relevant multilateral processes to protect and promote the rights of older persons. The family remained the nucleus of African societies; it played a critical role in knitting together the social fabric and was central to development. In July 2004, the African Union had adopted the Plan of Action on the Family in Africa.

46. Despite the progress made, Africa still faced many challenges in protecting and supporting families owing to widespread poverty. African leaders were struggling to deliver on their social development commitments owing to the economic slowdown, the food crisis, climate change, conflicts, malaria, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the Ebola crisis, but remained resolved to achieve the targets set. The Group welcomed the support of the international community in tackling the Ebola outbreak and urged its partners to follow through on their pledges to assist the countries still suffering the effects of the crisis. The New Partnership for Africa's Development had played a key role in supporting development.

47. Lastly, the African Group was committed to furthering social development and inclusion and believed strongly that no one should be left behind. It was therefore vital to address inequality and ensure that international trade provided equal opportunities to participate in global markets. Social development was the primary responsibility of Governments but international cooperation and assistance would also be needed to achieve the goals that had been set.

48. **Mr. Cortorreal** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the Community was committed to the attainment of social inclusion and integration, hunger and poverty eradication, the right to full and productive employment, and dignified and decent work for all. The eradication of poverty and hunger was an ethical, social and economic challenge and the provision of basic social services was a key instrument that would also address exclusion and promote social integration.

49. Education was the most important public good for achieving sustainable development and for ensuring better opportunities in a globalized world. Social inclusion in good-quality education at all levels was essential to the eradication of poverty and inequality. A number of CELAC countries had established quotas that would promote the inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

50. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development continued to be a key reference for social development, and the international community should step up its efforts to implement those instruments. International cooperation, including official development assistance, South-South and triangular cooperation and other forms of technical assistance were essential to social development. It was also critical to undertake necessary global financial and economic system reform.

51. The States members of CELAC attached the greatest importance to all social development issues, and they had demonstrated what could be achieved with limited resources through their programmes to promote social inclusion and empower vulnerable groups. CELAC was committed to promoting the inclusive economic growth, social progress and sustainable development of its members through national plans, programmes and policies with quantifiable goals that aimed to achieve universal enjoyment of all human rights, giving priority to people living in extreme poverty and other vulnerable groups. It was also vital to strengthen statistical capacity in order to measure progress and inform decision-making and policymaking.

52. The Community actively promoted the full social, political, economic and cultural inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities. It also

recognized that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a fundamental human rights and development instrument. CELAC welcomed the work of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities as well as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility. Given the scope of the challenge, it was clear that the concerns of such groups should be integrated into all public policies and programmes, especially sustainable development and poverty eradication strategies. Disability should therefore be considered within the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

53. Alarmingly, a high percentage of young people were neither in school nor in paid work. As they made up a large proportion of the population, it was essential to offer them education and training opportunities in order to ensure their full inclusion and participation in society.

54. It was a matter of concern that the population aged over 60 years was projected to grow by 56 per cent between 2015 and 2030. The inclusion of older persons should be promoted through broad social strategies and greater attention should be paid to population ageing by the international community. The Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Rights of Older Persons, adopted in June 2015, was the first legally binding instrument to address the human rights of older persons. CELAC recognized the deliberations that had taken place in the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and urged the Group to consider launching negotiations for an international convention for the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons. CELAC welcomed the work of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and awaited with interest the publication of her report in September 2016.

55. Families played in a key role in social development, and addressing their specific needs and challenges would be crucial to the elimination of discrimination and exclusion, and to the achievement of social development, sustainable development and improved living conditions. Lastly, social issues were not only a matter for the social sphere; they were also affected by economics, politics and the environment.

56. **Mr. Rahming** (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM was a strong proponent of instruments, including the 2030 Agenda, that recognized that people needed the opportunity to grow, develop their skills and contribute to their families and communities in a meaningful way, and that healthy, well-educated and well-trained persons were better equipped to meet their basic needs and achieve success. Social development required investment in people to enable them to reach their full potential. The Caribbean Community had been working with Member States, regional and international partners and community organizations on initiatives to help individuals to realize their potential through, inter alia, youth development, investment in education and the mainstreaming of the Community's disabilities agenda.

57. As more than 60 per cent of the Caribbean population was under 30 years of age, young people were considered vital assets with the capacity to act as agents of social change. The Youth Development Action Plan 2012-2017 empowered young people to realize their potential through youth entrepreneurship, leadership training and the engagement of at-risk youths.

58. Education was a key driver of sustainable development and could potentially build resilience to vulnerability, particularly in small States. Investment in education was tantamount to investment in the future. Through its education subprogramme, the Community was committed to enabling people to work for a better quality of life, and to providing the region with the knowledge and skills required for it to compete in the global environment of the twenty-first century. Although CARICOM was proud of its educational gains, such as the achievement of almost universal access to primary and secondary education and increased tertiary educational opportunities, levels of crime and violence threatened to undermine those gains, especially as high levels of unemployment, underemployment and skills gaps were causing concern.

59. CARICOM looked forward to the launch of the new Caribbean Development Bank Education and Training Policy and Strategy towards the end of 2016. The new educational development agenda incorporated inputs from key Caribbean stakeholders and would focus on disparities within the region's education systems, helping Caribbean countries to achieve

positive learning outcomes and contributing to the formation of high-quality knowledge-based economies.

60. Persons with disabilities in the Caribbean Community continued to be highly vulnerable, potentially subject to abuse, neglect, social marginalization and extreme poverty. In the Declaration of Pétion Ville, an outcome of the CARICOM High-Level Ministerial Meeting on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held in Haiti in December 2013, the Community's member States had reasserted the region's political commitment to ensuring that societies were inclusive. They had called for the appointment of a CARICOM rapporteur on disability, who would promote modern international standards of care and treatment, positive changes in attitudes, perception and behaviour and assistance in the development of laws and services for the protection and advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities. The upcoming commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would be an opportune moment to set the region on a more inclusive track.

61. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that Europe was currently implementing the 2030 Agenda in its internal and external policies. The founding treaty of the European Union noted the determination of its member States to promote economic and social progress for its peoples, taking into account the principle of sustainable development. Despite considerable progress and an improved economic situation, however, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda still presented challenges. Long-term unemployment, poverty, inequality and inadequate levels of social cohesion and social inclusion were particularly acute problems.

62. Economic progress should go hand-in-hand with improvements to people's lives, but to achieve that, investment and reforms were crucial. The Union had a €300 billion investment plan to stimulate the economy and thereby create jobs. It would also intensify its efforts to combat segmentation of the labour market and undeclared work, shift the tax burden away from the labour force, modernize pension systems and other social protection systems and invest in skills to improve the employability of young people and the long-term unemployed. The youth unemployment rate had dropped substantially since 2013, and its further reduction remained a top priority for the European Union. The European Union Youth Guarantee had yielded encouraging results across all Member States. Under the initiative, all young people received a quality job offer, traineeship, apprenticeship or the chance to continue their education within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Over the previous two years, bold structural reforms at the national level had led to improved pubic employment services, incentives to stimulate job creation, and measures to improve vocational education and training systems.

63. Governments should take steps to address age discrimination and ensure that older persons were able to access decent work, adequate pensions, health care, long-term care and protection against elder abuse. The European Union was committed to continuing to explore how the human rights of older persons could best be strengthened in ageing societies, as exemplified by its active role and input in the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing. Persons with disabilities continued to be disproportionately affected by unemployment and underrepresented in tertiary education within member States. The Union would continue to mainstream disability issues in its actions to combat unemployment and work towards their full and equal participation in society. It welcomed the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/EU/CO/1), the result of the first ever dialogue on the European Union implementation of an international human rights treaty. The recommendations, together with the input of representative organizations of persons with disabilities, were feeding into the preparations of the progress report on the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

64. The European Union promoted gender equality in all of its policies and activities. Specifically, it was working to increase the rate of women's employment, address the gender gap in pay, ensure a better balance between work and family life, combat occupational segregation, ensure the availability of affordable and

high-quality child care and combat violence against women. It welcomed the pledges made by States and regional organizations to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action expressed at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, as well as the gender-related Sustainable Development Goals. The European Union fully supported the fight against violence and discrimination against women, as stated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

65. Given the importance of family-related issues, it was developing a number of important actions addressing parental leave, the balance between family and work life, the living conditions of vulnerable families and domestic violence. The European Platform for Investing in Children had been established to promote child and family policy evaluation and the exchange of good practices. In 2013, the European Commission had adopted a recommendation urging Member States to increase efforts to tackle child poverty and social exclusion and promote children's well-being. In 2016, the Union had provided Member States with country-specific recommendations on child poverty, well-being and work-life balance.

66. There was, however, no room for complacency. Although labour market resilience was growing in the European Union, divergences in employment and social outcomes across Member States persisted, in particular within the euro area. The Union had launched a public consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights in order to identify principles to support well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems, including through renewed convergence within the euro area. A better understanding of new trends in work patterns and societies would make the European model more future-proof.

67. **Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Family in New York, said that the Group believed that the family was the natural and fundamental core unit of society with primary responsibility for nurturing and protecting children and acting as the guardian and protector of women, older persons and persons with disabilities. A healthy family environment could not be achieved without the total engagement of the State and society to protect the family. The family unit also was the centre of the education of children and young persons and its role could not be substituted by any alternative. In addition, it played a key role in social development, social cohesion and integration and was the primary agent of socialization and integration of its members into society. In compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Member States and the United Nations system should provide all possible support to protect and strengthen the institution of the family, in particular for families with children. All cultures and traditions respected the family as the main unit of society and the guardian of the rights of the child, and Member States should give special attention to family issues in accordance with their own national laws, traditions and religious backgrounds.

68. The Group urged the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and its focal point on the family to be more active in raising the international community's awareness of the importance of the family for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the International Year of the Family. Member States should in particular consider family-oriented policies and programmes in their implementation of Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

69. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that 2016 marked thirty years since the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, and it had also witnessed the first stage of measures taken by Member States towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Both milestones pointed to the fact that development could only be sustainable if it was inclusive.

70. The Egyptian Government was responsible for the promotion and protection of the family, which was defined in the Constitution as the basis of society. The country celebrated the Day of the Family in March every year. A new department of the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity was strengthening the institutional framework for family and childhood policies. It was implementing projects to prevent child labour, especially in rural areas, and to set up nurseries and care institutions for senior citizens. Moreover, the Government had approved draft laws on young persons and sport and developed a special strategy on youth employment. His Government was also working to establish a national council for senior citizens. A draft law on disability that reflected gains made by persons

with disabilities under the 2014 Constitution and mainstreamed issues affecting them within the country's national sustainable development strategy had been finalized and was currently under review by civil society organizations.

71. Numerous challenges hampered the achievement of social development, including the vicious cycle of poverty and income inequality. Other impediments included acts of terrorism in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel and the continuing occupation of the Arab Territories in Palestine and the Golan Heights. The 2030 Agenda should be implemented in accordance with the national policies and priorities of each Member State, and the social dimension given equal priority with the economic and environmental dimensions.

72. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay) said that Member States had embarked on the momentous task of harmonizing their national plans and programmes with the Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of achieving the Goals in all countries and regions within 15 years. Development would not be sustainable, however, if progress was made only in fits and starts.

73. One of the main tools employed by Paraguay to meet its commitment to leave no one behind was its national development plan, which plan focused on poverty reduction, the promotion of social development, inclusive economic growth and the country's inclusion in global markets. The plan provided for a number of social protection programmes to bolster the livelihoods of those with the least resources, especially women, vulnerable children and adults, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and rural populations. The Tekopora programme, for example, was designed to reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty and to improve the access of families to health and education, especially in the case of women who were heads of household. The Government was also carrying out a substantial programme of construction of affordable social housing to meet the needs of families with limited economic means.

74. With some 60 cent of its population under 30 years of age — one of the highest rates in Latin America — Paraguay firmly believed in the ability of young people to transform society. A national scholarship programme for postgraduate studies abroad and study grants for the teaching of specialist subjects had been introduced across the country in order to boost the country's long-term economic and social development. His delegation reiterated its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, in the belief that the achievement of sustainable development would contribute to more peaceful and socially cohesive societies.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.